



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 29, 2012

We are pleased to welcome Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland for the second time to the Permanent Council and thank him for his presentation on the recent activities of the Council of Europe.

We appreciate the Secretary General's role in fostering greater unity and facilitating economic and social progress in the region. Both the OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant, complementary roles to play in strengthening respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy in the region. We welcome the symbiosis between the two institutions, and we welcome the Council of Europe's decision to establish a new liaison office in Vienna. This new office will enhance further the coordination between the two organizations.

We value the organizations' long-standing cooperation on topics such as tolerance and non-discrimination, anti-trafficking, counterterrorism, and protection of national and ethnic minorities—all areas of great importance to the United States. We also commend the excellent coordination between the two organizations on media freedom and election observation.

The United States would welcome the attendance of the Council of Europe in informal OSCE meetings dealing with these issues, and we encourage the Chairmanship to redouble efforts to permit this, while respecting the OSCE's rules of procedure. We need to maximize our limited collective resources, and avoid duplication of efforts. The Council of Europe's attendance in select OSCE meetings could further enhance cooperation and add a more strategic focus to the two organizations' work.

Secretary General Jagland, we particularly commend your recent message to Europe's leaders urging them to 'stand up and speak clearly' against discrimination, racism and intolerance, Your work with the former Turkish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers to establish the Council's Group of Eminent Persons and support for its report "Living together. Combining diversity and freedom in 21st century Europe" underscore that message. We urge participating States to review the report and its guiding principles for government responses to racism and intolerance. Its focus on Roma and Sinti highlights the threat that racism and intolerance poses for the security of our region, and demonstrates that we need to do more to address one of our region's most acute human rights challenges.

We also welcome the Council of Europe's joint program with the European Commission for democratic reform in several of the OSCE Mediterranean Partner States. Both the OSCE and the Council of Europe have expertise on political and governance issues that is relevant to fragile new democracies, and we have a shared obligation to support the Mediterranean region's democratic transition, security, and stability. Their security is our security.

Secretary General, we thank you again for your appearance here today. As always, we wish you every success in your work and look forward to continued discussions on ways to work together to advance shared priorities for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.